

Taking Care--Documenting the Occupational Culture of Home Care Workers
Archie Green Fellows Project, 2014-2015
(AFC 2014/021: 01122)
Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Joye Willman interview, 2014-10-20 : interview conducted by Helen Marie Moss

INTERVIEW LOG

00:00:20 I agree to participate in the interview. Joye Willman lives in Portland, Oregon, been home care worker 22 years, works with all types of clients.

00:01:19 Got into it because needed flexible hours, had been around family with disabilities growing up.

00:02:17 Home care gives you a sense of self, lets you go home at night knowing you did something good, that if you weren't there they would be in a worse situation, example of client with OCD that she has helped.

00:03:36 Other jobs - jewelry store, thrift store, sold all the normal things women sell; school district.

00:04:13 Special skills? Depends on client's need. She doesn't do colostomy bags for example.

00:05:10 How learn skills - were mothers first or nurturing instinct, love for people/ animals, big heart. Now have training, did not in the beginning. Diabetes, keeping relationships professional, safety, lifting. More safety with education.

00:06:49 Typical duties - regular housekeeping, prepare food, take to Dr. or schedule and arrange transportation, anything they need done advocate for them with case worker.

00:08:30 Harder for seniors who used to be able to do things than for disabled. Example from past union leader Karen Thompson, who was born with one arm; thought another one would get in the way.

00:10:40 Some people don't have families, were in the Fairview Institution, severed family ties, and even forced sterilization. When came out of institution, didn't have that family nucleus, no support system. Home care worker fills in as family.

00:12:48 Delicate balance with family members, working as team or in hierarchy. Can create problems.

00:13:50 Boundaries? Depends on client. 99-year-old client who was quite demanding and anti-union.

00:15:25 Have to remind one client that she can't accept favors or gifts every month.

00:16:55 Stresses - two clients - each will call when I am working with the other person, complain to case worker about too many phone calls. They won't stop, now a big joke among all of them.

00:18:17 Occupational terms? Lots of union terms. Confusing acronyms, like CAPE.

00:19:30 Stories? - Story of my guy, known since 9 years old, cry when I talk about it, watched decline, when I was in abusive relationship, I thought of him (crying), wanted to thank him, now I am a caregiver for him. I'll stay with him until the end.

00:23:25 Talking with other home care workers - can be eating dinner and talking about colostomy bags - don't have a water cooler to congregate, so any time we have an event, you can't shut us up.

00:25:08 "Uber" important to have a sense of humor - one thing that got me through with 99-year-old woman, tell her a joke.

00:25:45 What attributes of job are good? Developed sense of self, was shy. Has grown, has inner energy. Was taking care of Mom in the last months of life. Home care worker peers helping her with care of Mom.

00:27:31 What is challenging? - getting everyone on the same page. Case manager, doctor, client, me, transport or, or, or.

00:28:13 Union - was union member before there was a home care worker union. Helped to create the union, history of formation of union, ballot measure 99 for home care commission, and someone to bargain with.

00:31:23 I am the only person who has been in all of the bargaining sessions, management or union.

00:31:30 Nothing in the beginning - Amazed to find out 200 home care workers just in my zip code, did not know that, invisible no more theme, didn't take out taxes, big issue.

00:32:38 \$3.20 an hour, then owe taxes, no insurance or worker's comp.

00:34:16 First contract got this resolved, and insurance and worker's comp, they were afraid we would all claim worker's comp, didn't happen.

00:35:56 Got a raise, and last contract went to \$13.00 an hour.

00:36:30 Talking to legislators about all the different issues, even Facebook friends with them

00:37:27 Harder job than people think it is, when we talk to legislature, any thing we get for us we are also benefiting consumer.

00:38:30 How relax when off work? What off work time? ha ha. Rose Society, loves beach and to read.

00:39:16 Read to clients? Not books, but documents, and ballot explanations so can make informed decision. One client doing an interview with Kate Brown, Secretary of State, about elderly and disabled.

00:40:00 A lot of seniors think they cannot vote. Interview on YouTube, and they put something in the voter's pamphlet.

00:41:13 End of interview.